

On the Wilde Side

by Bringer of Rain

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Summary: Nick vowed to prove everyone wrong: to show society that foxes could amount to more than just common thieves and criminals. Fifteen years later, the first ever fox on the ZPD finds himself saddled with an eager-eyed bunny recruit who thinks she can take on the world. Of course, he never expected that they would actually have to take on the world. Things are funny like that.

## 1. Same Old, Same Old?

**\*\*On the Wilde Side\*\***

**\*\*A/N:** Decided I wanted to try doing some spontaneous writing about Zootopia after I thoroughly enjoyed the movie in cinemas. Essentially, it's a different take about how events would change if Nick were a member of the ZPD from the beginning. Please note that since I watched the movie a while ago, I don't remember the exact dialogue from each scene and as a result some dialogue from familiar scenes may have been altered. I also could not find a transcript for the play, so when one is released I'll go back and edit some of the dialogue so it's accurate to the movie. Please leave a follow or review if you enjoyed it, or leave a review telling me why you didn't and how I can improve. **\*\***

The alarm went off at six thirty, but Nick P. Wilde had already been awake long ago. He lay flat on his back on his uncomfortably hard mattress, staring up at his ceiling while intently studying the cracks and folds on the worn plaster. By his count, there had been more cracks on his ceiling than stars in the sky last night. It was the price to pay for renting a cheap apartment.

He would be late to work if he didn't get dressed soon, but Nick was seldom ever on time for his job. Chief Bogo would go mental when he arrived ten minutes late, raving on about how he was an irresponsible idiot and would be fired the next time he was late, but he never came good on his threat and most of the enjoyment Nick extracted from his

job came from watching Bogo go blue in the face.

What followed afterwards would be a long shift of patrolling the slums and the seedy underbelly of Zootopia: a place held in such high regards by so many animals because of its high buildings and seemingly endless opportunity. Animals didn't see the discrimination and hate induced violence that occurred on a near daily basis. Even the middle to upper class citizens of Zootopia rarely caught a glimpse of the slums. As long as it was convenient for them, animals usually ignored the problems and even the existence of the slums.

Nick sighed, slowly sliding off his bed and going to get dressed. It had always been his dream to work for the ZPD ever since he was a little cub. All his comrades from childhood had either become hustlers or found themselves behind bars; victims of limited opportunity. The stereotype that foxes were unreliable, shady characters had for some reason become a widely accepted fact amongst society. An employer would very rarely consider a fox for the job if there were another reasonable candidate available, even if the fox had the better credentials.

So Nick had worked hard. He had trained tirelessly, had many sleepless nights, and proved so many doubtful animals wrong with his quick thinking and quick reflexes. He gave the supervisors at the training facility camp no other option than to consider him their top recruit, and he had been given the honors despite a very large reluctance from practically everyone involved. Giving the award to a fox seemed to be an absurd notion for them.

And yet, despite his supposed honors, he still found himself receiving a low standing at the ZPD. Sure he was late practically every day, and his smart remarks tended to make him more enemies than friends, but he worked extremely hard and very rarely did he ever finish his patrol on the allocated time. He would always do an hour extra of patrolling, just to be safe, which was something that no other officer could boast. While other recruits that had joined at similar times received ideal locations to patrol such as Sahara Square or Tundratown, Nick had immediately been allocated the slums and had been stuck there for just under a year.

It was frustrating to say the least. It felt as though he had never really been given the opportunity to become a bona fide part of the ZPD. All the other officers intentionally gave him a wide berth, and the only animal that he ever really ever talked to was Clawhauser. Which wasn't always a good thing, because Clawhauser only ever talked about Gazelle and donuts and sometimes Nick would get the urge to shove those donuts somewhere unpleasant.

Still, it could be worse. At least he wasn't a meter maid.

Adjusting his tie with the help of a small mirror, Nick's eye caught the dull gleam of his badge pinned directly over his heart. He had worn that badge proudly when he had first started, a symbol of his endeavor, but lately wearing it had seemed to become more of a chore than a privilege.

His mother had been so proud of him when he had first joined the department. He hadn't had the heart to tell her that lately he had felt like quitting. Showing the doubtful animals that he could make a

positive change in society was what he had joined the ZPD for, but he felt as though his current impact was as far from any type of change as possible. It just seemed pointless.

Nick felt like he was being muzzled all over again, just like he was back in his childhood. Only this time there was nowhere else for him to go to prove society wrong. Perhaps it was just easier to become what society expected him to be: a lowlife nobody.

'Today's not going to be any different,' he sighed to himself, unpinning his badge from his chest and placing it into his pocket. 'At least I get to see Bogo get mad again.'

Locking the door to his apartment and exiting the building, he offered a charming smile to the old koala that owned the complex. She glared distrustfully at him, and for a moment Nick wanted to turn around and taunt her, but he kept his tongue in cheek. It was unwise to taunt the person who owned keys to your apartment, and could evict you if given even the slightest of reasons. His apartment may have been worn down and honestly unfit for any animal to live in, but it was still his.

The walk from his apartment to the Police Station wasn't a particularly long one, but Nick always took the scenic route. Not that it was particularly scenic: the tall buildings dwarfed almost anything natural. It was simply an excuse to get Chief Bogo mad.

Advertisements flickered on the billboards as he walked past, providing ample distraction from the glares he was receiving from random animals. Most of the advertisements were for meaningless products. Things that people bought when they had too much money and too much time on their hands. Others were unbelievably expensive simple things that would have had Nick's jaw dropping had he not already seen the exact same advertisements over and over again. Honestly, it was no wonder that so many animals resorted to crime to make a living.

Amidst all the meaningless information, one particular billboard caught his eye. The image was a familiar one that had been shown all over the news and been plastered all over advertising campaigns for the past week. It was the image of a rabbit in a police uniform, shaking the hand of the mayor. The rabbit in question looked ecstatic, the mayor uncomfortable in his bent position, with the slogan underneath: 'Mayor Lionheart; supporter of prey everywhere.'

Nick told himself that it was no big deal, but he couldn't pry his eyes away from the billboard. Truth be told, what he had seen left an undeniably hurtful mark. When he had been awarded the top recruit honors, there had been next to no media exposure. He had not shaken hands with the mayor or been paraded around on billboards, but rather his achievement had been swept under the rug. He had been told that it was better to keep everything quiet so that the animals of the general public wouldn't immediately become distrustful of him or the ZPD. In other words, they didn't want other animals knowing that a fox was part of the ZPD.

But a rabbit? That was perfectly fine. It would no doubt get many supporters from all the prey out there that voted, so the bunny's

achievement could be paraded around as though it was the most important thing in the world.

A low snarl escaped from Nick's snout, scaring a nearby passing sheep that cried out and scampered away as if her life depended on it. Nick just rubbed his eyes tiredly and kept walking.

He reached the station late, as per usual, and forced a fake smile onto his face before he entered. It would do no good to show the other officers how completely worthless he felt. He had sworn to himself that he would never reveal any weakness to another animal.

'Oh Nick!' Clawhauser greeted him once Nick reached the front desk, crumbs from the many donuts he had eaten still evident on his whiskers and fur. 'Chief Bogo was looking for you. He looks reeeeeeealy mad!'

It was a dramatic performance from Clawhauser, filled with large hand gestures that had Nick rolling his eyes. 'It's nice to see you too Clawhauser. Don't worry about me. Chief Bogo couldn't hurt a fly.'

'But I can hurt you,' a deep, angry voice said from behind him as Nick turned and found himself face to face with a very irate Chief Bogo. 'You're late again Wilde! What's your excuse this time?'

Nick smirked. 'Traffic, sir. I couldn't have made it on time even if I woke up an hour early.'

'I have it on good authority that you walk to work, Wilde.'

'There was a lot of traffic on the sidewalks today. Crazy young kids and their ideas of driving.'

Chief Bogo didn't look impressed, and was visibly trying and failing to reign in his temper. Nick gave him another smug smirk before walking towards the meeting room. He may have been a lowly fox, but the very few foxes that held a higher position in society had still positively regarded his achievement. After all, there had never been a fox on the ZPD before. If he were outright fired, Mayor Lionheart would have quite a few headaches to deal with and there was no doubt that Lionheart had given Chief Bogo the specific order of not to fire Nick. Which was good, because it meant that Nick essentially got a free pass to mess with Bogo. Unfortunately, it also meant that Bogo was looking for any small misstep as a genuine excuse to fire him.

Nick entered the meeting room, immediately making a beeline for a vacant seat at the back. He liked the back for two main reasons. The first being that the officers at the back barely gave him a second glance, and the second being it allowed him to better observe the reactions of the room without being observed himself.

And a certain bunny had caught his eye the moment he had entered, although he was fairly sure that she hadn't noticed him. Just like the poster, there was an almost visible aura of happiness and achievement that she seemed to exude coupled with a glint of determination in her big, purple eyes. The other animals in the room dwarfed her, and she was barely able to keep her eyes above the desk

while standing up on her chair. Nick knew he would have to stifle a laugh when Chief Bogo told them all to sit down.

The fox spray tied loosely to her belt really earned her no points in Nick's mind. The officers of the ZPD were already prejudiced enough as it was, and a bunny with a phobia of foxes that still thought foxes would eat her was just the thing Nick needed to brighten up his day.

The fact that they still made the stupid fox repellant stuff was a testament to the prejudice that still existed. The stupid rabbits in Bunnyburrows pretty much owned a monopoly on the stuff while all 300 of their equally stupid children toiled away on their carrot farms. It put a bad taste in his mouth. Not the carrots though: for some reason, he seemed to have a guilty pleasure of eating carrots. Not that anyone would ever find out.

Interrupting everyone's idle conversations was the entrance of Chief Bogo. Having to hunch to enter the room, Chief Bogo did cut an imposing figure. His head was down, eyebrows furrowed at the clipboard he was currently holding in his hand. His large stature combined with his no-nonsense attitude often caused many new recruits to silently take his orders while catering to his ever whim and desire. Even some of the more senior officers still cowered at the intimidating Cape buffalo. It took everything Nick had to not call him 'Chief Buffalo Butt'.

'Sit down everyone,' Bogo began gruffly, lifting his eyes from the clipboard but retaining his serious expression. 'There are three things I have on the agenda today before you are all dismissed and able to do your jobs, or whatever sorry excuse constitutes for doing your job.'

It's time we talked about the elephant in the room. Marge's birthday.

The second is that we have a new recruit today that I'm supposed to introduce to you. Supposedly, she was top of her class. However, I don't care so I'm moving on.

The third is that we have made no progress on the missing mammal cases for two months now, and Mayor Lionheart is starting to grow anxious. Any information you have regarding these cases is invaluable, and becomes your number one priority should an opportunity arise. Anyone who wishes to take one of the cases can feel free to come and talk to me in their own time.'

Nick yawned. Bogo was like a broken record. Day in, day out he would just repeat the same statements with small differences between each speech. Nothing was urgently wrong with Zootopia, and so there was never really any large crisis that had to be dealt with. The missing mammals case were the strangest thing that had happened to Zootopia all year, and even that had become a cold case a mere week after the first disappearance had been reported.

The bunny appeared to be extremely surprised by her lack of introduction and sunk deeper into her chair. What Bogo had done wasn't surprising at all, considering he had done the same thing to Nick on his first day. Nick had walked into the meeting room with chest puffed out in pride, and it had been deflated only moments

later by Chief Bogo's casual dismissal of him and his achievements. It had set the standard for all things to come.

'Am I boring you, Wilde?'

The question brought Nick out of his stupor, looking up to see Bogo yet again staring at him with an angry expression on his face. The rabbit seemed to be looking at him curiously as well, just noticing that an actual fox was an officer. Perhaps it was time to take Chief Bogo down a few pegs while the new recruit was watching.

'You could never bore me Sir. You look too good in that uniform.'

His cheeky reply made Bogo see red, and stutter out an incoherent reply. A chorus of uncertain laughter rose from the officers around him, and the bunny's jaw seemed to drop at his casual insult towards his superior. Nick winked at her, and she immediately turned her head away. Although not before Nick could see a tinge of red in her cheeks though.

'Are you taunting me?' Bogo finally managed to reply, his voice shaking with anger. Nick wagered that the only reason he wasn't exploding was because he wanted to keep a cool face in front of his newest recruit.

'I would never', Nick said, placing his paws over his heart. 'I respect you too much for that Chief.'

"Mess with the bull and you get the horns" was an apt saying to describe Chief Bogo. Irrespective of his species, Bogo was about as thick headed as they came and had a very hard time taking a joke. Scratch that, he had no time to take a joke. The buffalo simply shook his head, and took a moment to compose himself before pretending that nothing had happened. Nick would probably be in for some late hours in the next few days courtesy of the Chief, but the sheer satisfaction he derived from these alterations made it worth it.

'Marge and Jonas, you both take Sahara Square to patrol,' Chief Bogo ordered, reading off his clipboard. 'Katie, Mark and Riggs, the three of you are going undercover on the Ramirez case. Try and get as much information as you can.'

Wilde, you're going to be patrolling the slums again. I don't want to see your smug face here until after hours.'

All the officers nodded, getting up from their seats and exiting the room. Nick gave a mock salute and got up to leave. It seemed as though nothing would change for him yet again.

'And as for you Officer Hoppsâ€¦parking duty.'

That got Nick's attention, causing him to freeze with his paw on the door. Parking duty was very rarely given to any operating officer from the ZPD, and if it ever was it was generally a form of soft punishment. To his knowledge, the role of parking officer was only permanently given to officers who were unsuited to the rigors of police life: those who had barely passed with the required marks at the training facility camp or passed on some vague technicality. It

was a role that was never given to a top recruit, who-as the media had constantly repeated throughout the past week-passed with flying colors despite her size.

She seemed equally as distraught at the situation, and equally unsure at how to proceed. 'Umâ€¦excuse meâ€¦Chief Bogoâ€¦I'm not sure if you're aware, Sir, but Iâ€¦ I was the top of my class at the training facility.'

Chief Bogo looked up from his clipboard, and Nick immediately noticed the hard stare he was giving the rabbit. It was the hard stare that was normally reserved for Nick: one filled with prejudice.

'I know. I just don't care.'

'But Chief Bogo, I want to make a difference out there. I can't do that as a parking officer.'

'Let it go, Officer Hopps.'

'But Sirâ€¦'

'Life isn't some cartoon musical where you sing a little song and all your insipid dreams magically come true! So letâ€¦ it â€¦go.'

Although he didn't like to admit it, Nick felt a twinge of sympathy for the rabbit. Bogo was being unreasonably harsh on her, most likely because he thought that a rabbit would be unsuited to the job despite her apparent success. Bogo had thought the exact same thing about Nick when he had first arrived, and took every opportunity he could to make that fact abundantly clear to Nick. Mayor Lionheart must have yet again been breathing down his back, and the frustrated Chief was taking it out on the poor rabbit. He gave her credit though, because the rabbit never dropped her head.

'Besides,' Chief Bongo continued, staring down the crestfallen rabbit. 'All other areas of patrol are taken. There is no other option for you but to be a parking officer until a spot becomes vacant.'

For a brief moment, a memory flashed before Nick's eyes. He was a cub yet again: dressed in a brand new uniform for the day he became a member of the scouts despite being a predator, practically looking like the definition of happiness. He remembered feeling horrified, as those who he had thought were his friends muzzled him, degraded him and humiliated him. He remembered crying alone in an alleyway, struggling to pull off the muzzle wrapped tightly around his snout, vowing to show society that foxes could be good and didn't have to be muzzled by cowering prey. He remembered never truly being given the chance to make a difference.

And for another split second, the image of a purple-eyed Bunny, trying desperately to make a difference but being inexplicably muzzled before she had the chance to try, replaced the image of himself.

Nick disliked rabbits. Nick disliked prey. He had been treated as though he were a monster all throughout his life by both rabbits and prey despite never even having the remote intention to kill and eat

another living animal. He was perceived by them and by society as sneaky, conceited, and dangerous. In their eyes, he was nothing more than a common criminal. So the words that came out of his mouth surprised him just as much as Chief Bogo or the rabbit.

'I'll take her as my partner.'

## 2. First Arrest

**\*\*On the Wilde Side**  
><strong>

**\*\*A/N:** Thank you to everyone that reviewed, followed or left a favorite on this story. I was overwhelmed by the response and it really motivated me to get the following up chapter out quicker despite having a heap of homework to complete. **\*\***

**\*\*Quick clarification on a review by the user "Sturdivant".** At my school, and I believe in Australia in general, it is preferred to use single quotations for speech and double quotations for internal monologues/thought processes. While I personally don't really care what I use, my exams for this year in the subjects of English and Literature have teachers asking me specifically to use single quotations for speech/quotes and I'm sad to say I've lost marks for not doing so before. As a result I'll still be using single quotations for additional practice: I'm sorry if this affects your enjoyment of the story. **\*\***

The silence after his exclamation was deafening. Chief Bogo looked incredulous, for once staring at Nick in disbelief rather than anger. The bunny looked equal parts surprised and grateful, although there was no mistaking the apprehension in her eyes. Perhaps she thought that he wanted her for dinner?

'Is this another one of your unfunny jokes, Wilde?' Chief Bogo finally asked, breaking the uncomfortable silence that had fallen over them.

Nick was silently cursing himself. Why did he have to suddenly open his big mouth and ask for a bunny, of all animals, for a partner? He had always enjoyed working solo for numerous reasons: having to worry about another animal when you were working on a case was one. The fact that most officers would leave Nick stranded in a dangerous situation was another.

Just because the rabbit had gotten the short end of the stick for probably the first time in her entitled life, it didn't make her anything like him. Rabbits were seen as cute and cuddly creatures. Foxes were seen as dangerous criminals. A rabbit officer on the ZPD was apparently the greatest thing that had ever happened to Zootopia. A fox officer was hidden from the general public.

He still had the chance to play it off as a joke. It would teach the rabbit that life wasn't fair for everyone, and that the saying 'anyone can be anything' was just a way for the Mayor to attract tourists and take their money. Sure, she would probably be upset for a little while, but then she'd most likely return to her three hundred brothers and sisters and resume her apple pie life on the farm. At least she had that option to fall back on.



But he couldn't do that. The image of her being muzzled had been so vivid that it had practically burned itself into his skull.

'No Sir,' Nick replied, offering a forced smile. 'I've never been one to joke around.'

'And what makes you think I'll allow this?'

The no-nonsense question from Chief Bogo was addressed to the bunny, who was practically skipping on the spot with excitement. Apparently having forgotten the fact that only a few moments ago she was about to become a meter maid, the apprehension in her eyes made way to a sparkle of pure joy.

'I'm sure I'm up to the task, Chief Bogo. I've been training for this ever since I was a kid. I won't let you down, Sir, I'll promise!'

Nick pointed his claw at her. 'What she said.'

Chief Bogo looked down at his clipboard in quiet contemplation. Another uncomfortable silence descended over the three of them, with the only audible sound the soft 'thump' of the bunny switching nervously between her two feet.

'Officer Hopps,' Bogo addressed the rabbit, having finally made his decision. 'After very little deliberation I have decided not to make you a parking officer. Since you appear to be unnaturally eager to prove yourself, you will be partnered with Officer Wilde and tasked with patrolling the slums. Perhaps some of your enthusiasm will rub off on him.'

'However,' he continued, lowering himself until his face was only a few inches away from Nick's, 'If you or your new partner so much as breathe in a way that inconveniences me, I'm going to make sure that you wish you had never been born. Do I make myself clear, Wilde?'

'Crystal.'

Without so much as a goodbye, Chief Bogo abruptly exited the room, leaving a pensive fox and a grateful bunny to come face to face with each other for the first time. Big, purple eyes stared into calculating, green orbs.

'Thanks for helping me out,' the bunny began, offering her hand to him. 'The name's Hopps. Judy Hopps.'

Nick shook her hand casually. 'Nice to meet you Carrots.'

Nick went to exit through the door, motioning for Judy to follow, but quickly found his pathway blocked by a very annoyed rabbit. Her nose was twitching furiously, hands on hips, looking extremely unimpressed. Nick had to stifle a laugh. Now would be a perfect opportunity to rile up the bunny.

'Don't call me Carrots. My name is Judy.'

'Carrots suits you better. Judy is a stupid name.'

The tone of her voice was laced with frustration. 'Give me one good reason why you would say that.'

'Alright then,' Nick began mischievously, leaning casually against one of the desks. 'What job do your parents have?'

'My parents are carrot farmers, butâ€¦'

'Okay,' Nick interrupted. 'What job would you have right now if you weren't a police officer?'

'â€¦Probably a carrot farmer, butâ€¦'

'What's your favorite food?'

'â€¦Roasted carrots.'

'I have every right to call you Carrots. You were probably a carrot in a past life.'

With that, he pushed past her and back into the main entrance of the station. The entrance of the ZPD was always a sprawling hub of activity. Whining and complaining criminals in handcuffs were brought in by officers and escorted to the cells. Citizens sat on steel benches to the sides; waiting for their turn to make a complaint or to speak to an imprisoned loved one. Animal lawyers ran around aimlessly, trying to converse with clients or officers. The occasional representatives of the press were there, trying to disguise themselves as the general public and fooling absolutely nobody.

Clawhauser sat in the middle of it all, acting as the receptionist and the main source of communication between all the operating officers. If you had a complaint or needed backup on a case, you would have to go through Clawhauser. The friendly big cat rarely ever did his job properly though, preferring to chat to random animals about a new Gazelle song or a new application he had recently downloaded on his phone. Sometimes he got so absorbed in his conversations that he completely missed or ignored distress calls, which seriously made Nick question why he hadn't been fired already.

Judy finally managed to catch up to him, having to frantically dodge and weave her way through all the activity. Nick wagered that she was unused to having to deal with so many big animals in such a big space. Country life never truly prepared you for life in the city.

They both exited the building together, finding themselves in the bustling streets of Upper Zootopia. Nick glanced over at Judy, watching her reaction as she drank in the sights.

There was no doubting that Zootopia was a beautiful place. It had to be if it was to truly be considered the land where anyone could be anything. Practically every species of animal walked on the bustling streets at any one time. Large buildings as high as the eye could see sparkled with elegant and colorful designs. Smaller, more humble shops catered to any vague need or whim an animal could have. Framed by a shining sun and a vast canvas of seemingly endless blue sky,

Zootopia was truly a place to behold.

But there were places that the sun wouldn't reach, where there wasn't endless opportunity, and that was what Nick saw everyday. It made the beautiful sights where the rich lived seem trivial in comparison.

'It's beautiful.' Judy exclaimed, completely enraptured by the sights that lay before her. Nick gave the slightest nod of his head as affirmation, and then motioned towards the direction that they would be walking to reach the slums.

'Take it in while you can. Where we're stationed the sights are a little moreâ€¦unpleasant.'

She turned to him; awe giving away to determination as she puffed out her chest. Nick wondered if he had acted like that when he had first joined the ZPD: eager to become an officer without any idea of what it truly entailed. A basic patrol was something that an established officer would take little pride in, and after a year of being saddled with the same patrol every day the pride quickly turned into contempt.

The dull gleam of her badge caught his eye, pinned directly over her heart. It had been polished recently, as he could make out his own reflection in the bronze metal. She wore it proudly in such a way that it reminded him of his first days as an officer; not that he would admit that to anyone.

'Oh yeah,' Judy said, breaking Nick out of his thoughts. 'You never told me your name.'

'Nick,' Nick replied, taking the sunglasses located inside his pocket and putting them on. 'Nick Wilde.'

'That's a stupid name too.'

'When you look this good, sweetheart, it doesn't really matter.'

Well, one thing was for sure: the slums certainly weren't as glamorous as Upper Zootopia. They had originally been built for the disadvantaged animals in Zootopia who were struggling with the rapidly growing prices as the city expanded. It had been a way for those animals to become a part of Zootopia's diverse culture without being filthy rich.

That ideal hadn't lasted long. As soon as Mayor Lionheart took over, he diverted the money from the slums and pumped the additional funds into the rich areas. As a result, the areas of Zootopia that were exposed to the public and had accommodation to purchase were beautiful and prosperous. To be fair, most of Zootopia had become beautiful and prosperous. Unfortunately the slums had been mostly ignored.

Nick had grown up on the outskirts of the slums, surrounded by the dirty and rundown buildings. His father had left at a young age, leaving just his mother and himself. His mother had tried diligently to support them both but it hadn't been an easy task. When he had wanted a junior scout uniform, she had only barely been able to

scrape together the money to buy it for him. They barely had enough money for food afterwards, and Nick never really forgave himself for being that selfish.

Most species of animals that lived in the slums were generally not well liked by society. Foxes; weasels; rats: there were a lot of stereotypes surrounding these animals and they were considered to be amongst the most untrustworthy and vile species of mammals in Zootopia.

The saddening thing was that the animals that lived in the slums usually conformed to society's expectations. So many bright foxes living in the slums had been arrested or gone on to live shady lives because that was what was expected of them. The possibility that they would be accepted by society was just a childish ideal that vanished as soon as they got older.

Nick hadn't been able to get away quick enough. Becoming an officer was his way of showing everyone that he was above all this; that foxes could amount to more than just common thieves and criminals. To shake the way he had been treated all his life. To change the way people viewed foxes, and other "shady" species, so that the people in the slums could be liberated and freed from the binds of society.

And then he had been sent right back to the slums as an Officer: to the place where he could make no difference and where nobody would listen to him. Another muzzle.

'So what're we going to do?' Judy asked, the excitement she had from earlier persisting despite the drastic change in scenery. 'Save the day? Arrest some criminals? Punch some bad guys in the name of the Law?'

'Nope. We're going to walk around aimlessly until someone needs us.'

Studying the expressions of the rabbit was interesting for Nick. After his statement, her expression had gone from excited to extremely confused in the blink of an eye. He found it amazing how quickly she could go from annoyed, to excited, to angry and to eager all over again.

He had met other officers who had been extremely emotional on the field before, but so far the rabbit took the carrot cake. It was a stark contrast to Nick's preferred smooth and self-assured approach.

'Huh?' Judy questioned, seeking clarification. 'But I thought the Chief assigned us to this area.'

'Immediate action is for missions, Carrots. We're on a patrol, which means people come to us when they need help, not vice versa. Even then, from experience most people wanting help in this area are just crying wolf. Today's going to more be about you getting a feel for the slums so you don't get overwhelmed and go crying to momma rabbit.'

Judy looked extremely irritated at his comment, but rather than response chose to observe the rundown buildings. There was graffiti

all over the walls of the houses, all of which had lost their once vibrant color and faded into a dull, industrial grey that hurt the eyes.

'It's so bleak.' Judy commented as they kept walking, her ears twitching whenever she heard even the most vague of noises in the distance.

Nick nodded. 'This is the place that Zootopia forgot about. It's a pretty tough place to live, I'll tell you that much. A lot of shady stuff goes on around here and we're the ones responsible for stopping it.'

'Awesome,' Judy said with a grin. 'That means I can make a difference here.'

'I thought I could too,' Nick replied, suddenly feeling tired. 'But the world doesn't always work the way you want it to.'

"Help, Police, Help!"

The sound had come from the corner of the street. Both Nick and Judy ran towards the voice as fast as they could, forgetting their conversation with each other.

The voice belonged to an ageing female tiger that appeared to be very distressed. She wore an expensive black outfit that was extremely out of place in the dirty streets. The colorful, smudged makeup adorning her face appeared to be of reasonably high quality that definitely would not have been obtainable in any shop located at the slums.

The beginnings of ugly, purple bruises could be seen through her black fur and indicated a brief struggle. The lack of any accessories on her figure, despite her dressed up appearance, indicated a mugging to Nick.

It was a fairly common occurrence. Animals from the richer areas usually had no genuine experience in dealing with the slums, and found themselves easy targets for the more ambitious and conniving of the criminals. The money of a rich animal wandering the streets was usually enough to buy a considerable meal or two.

'Officer Nick from the ZPD, at your service ma'am,' Nick introduced, and then pointed at Judy. 'This is my partner, Officer Hopps. What seems to be the problem?'

'We'd be happy to help.' Judy added, opening a notepad that had been located in her breast pocket and pulling out an unbelievably large pen that was shaped like a large carrot.

'Is this some kind of joke?' The woman spat, looking at both Nick and Judy as though they were the most disgusting things she had ever seen. 'Since when did the ZPD let rabbits and foxes into their ranks? The whole department is going to the dogs, I tell you.'

The anger that formed on Judy's face earned her a few points in Nick's book. Dealing with prejudiced people was something that Nick genuinely hated doing.

Unfortunately, as he was well aware, being prejudiced towards foxes

had become commonplace and was present in almost all aspects of society. He could walk into a shop in Upper Zootopia without his uniform and be refused service simply because of his species. Even though he didn't show it on his face, the dismissive comment had also made him angry.

He guessed that Judy must have been hassled a lot due to her size as well. While rabbits were seen in a positive light by society, there was also the ever-present idea that all they were good for was growing carrots and looking cute; nothing more than toys to be put back on the toy shelf. The fact that no other rabbit had ever tried to become an officer further added to the disbelief that a rabbit would make a competent member of the ZPD, and no amount of good publicity could fix the doubts that a lot of the animals may have had regarding her capabilities. The ZPD was traditionally a place for the larger animals like elephants and rhinos: it was no place for a small and cuddly rabbit, or a fox that would most assuredly be a criminal in disguise.

He may have disliked rabbits in general, but if there was one thing Nick hated it was judging an animal off the basis of prejudice. Admittedly he may have been guilty of doing so at times, but only when he was feeling angry or bitter. Judy should not have been spoken down to by a random animal and treated as though her performances in the field would be inferior simply because of her species.

'They started letting foxes and rabbits into the ZPD ever since we evolved from savages,' Nick finally replied, placing his paw reassuringly on Judy's shoulder. 'You must have skipped that stage.'

The tiger's face contorted in anger, as she lifted her chin up haughtily at them. 'Do you know who I am? If you weren't an officer of the Law I'd make sure you were arrested for that insult.'

'Well if I was an officer I would arrest people that insult my partner or me,' Nick said smugly, pulling his badge out of his pocket. 'Oh wait, I am. So please, get to the point.'

The tiger grumbled incoherently as Nick pocketed his badge. He took a quick glance at Judy to make sure that she had calmed down, and was surprised to see that she also had a grin on her face. The rabbit may have been small, but Nick was starting to get the sense that she could have one hell of a temper.

'I was robbed a moment ago by my ex-boyfriend, Daniel Murdoch,' the tiger recalled quietly, not bothering to mask the disdain in her voice. 'He lives at 23 Vulpes street. He took my purse and all the money I had inside it, and I need it back.'

'What's your name, Ms.?' Judy asked.

'That's none of your business,' the tiger growled back. 'Just do the job the council pays you to do and get me my stuff back.'

Nick simply ignored her last insult, instead choosing to walk in the direction of the street she had given them. It wasn't too far away and was in all probability a five-minute walk even at a slow pace.

He may have hated being confined to the slums, hated doing the same thing day in day out with no change, but Nick always did his job properly. Memorizing every street name had been the first thing he had done when he had been assigned the slums and to this day it was still an invaluable asset.

Once they were no longer within earshot of the tiger, Judy spoke. 'Gee, who shoved a carrot up her butt?'

'Everyone in the slums has some sort of problem,' Nick replied, his concentrated gaze flickering away from the streets signs to the obnoxiously large carrot abomination that Judy held in her hand. 'They're usually a lot more subtle than that lady though. What's up with the giant carrot?'

'I grew up on a carrot farm,' Judy answered, pocketing the pen. 'You have to learn how to love them or there's no way you can get up in the morning.'

'Did your three hundred brothers and sisters get the same treatment?'

'Two hundred and seventy five brothers and sisters, actually.'

Nick stopped walking and turned to face Judy. She seemed completely oblivious to the fact that she had been insulted until she turned and found Nick with a smug smirk on his face and raised eyebrows.

She crossed her arms and huffed. 'Shut up.'

They walked through the streets in silence. Nick had no problem at navigating his way through the mostly empty streets. Animals tended to avoid walking openly in the slums. The few animals they did encounter usually gave them an unpleasant and condescending stare before continuing on their way. Everyone seemed to have a problem with him or her.

His thoughts turned to Judy. The rabbit seemed to have some personal problems as well, and with these problems came a point to prove. Animals rarely exited their sphere of comfort unless someone showed them the way, and unfortunately that had led to stereotypes dictating the thoughts and feelings of society as a whole.

She'd quickly learn that, in many ways, it would be a hopeless endeavor. Right now she was filled with an infectious optimism and saw the world through her big, starry eyes. She thought that she could change the way animals thought about her and her species. Nick had thought the same, but a year of being unable to change anything, or rather not being given the chance to change anything, had made him see the world through cynical green eyes.

Nick finally stopped outside the given address: a small, single story house that looked about as close to the definition of safety hazard as possible. The grass on the lawn had long since shriveled and died, while all the windows on the house had been boarded haphazardly with rotting wooden planks. It probably had room for a small back yard, judging by the size of the house compared to the land it was built on.

'This is the address that the woman gave us,' Nick spoke up,

attempting to look through the cracks in the boarded windows. 'It looks like it's seen better days.'

Judy watched Nick as he craned his neck to try and look inside, and tapped her foot impatiently. After waiting for only the briefest of moments she tapped her foot again and let out a frustrated sigh.

'What are we waiting for? Let's get him to open up so we can search the premises.'

'Dumb bunny,' Nick scolded, gently hitting her on the head. 'What's the first thing you'd try to do if you were guilty of a crime?'

'Run away?' Judy replied, staring at him with an unimpressed look on her face while gently rubbing the top of her head.

'Bingo. Try and use that small brain once in a while. Climb over the fence and wait in his backyard. If he's actually guilty he'll try to escape out the back and run straight into you. Make sure you have your handcuffs ready.'

It was a typical procedure. If the animal inside the house was guilty of taking the purse, he would have to look for an outlet to escape. Considering that all the windows were barred so tightly that Nick could barely see anything through them meant that the animal could only try to escape through the backyard. Right where Judy would be.

The other option was that the animal wasn't guilty and the tiger was just using the purse robbing as a smokescreen for something else. Unfortunately for Nick, it had happened before and Chief Bogo had been very close to firing him in a fit of rage.

Judy jumped the fence cleanly and ran frantically to man the backdoor. Nick shook his an amused snort, before putting on his signature smug grin and knocking on the grimy door of the house.

The animal that answered was a very disheveled looking tiger with dirty brown fur, wearing a stained singlet and brown shorts. He appeared to be slightly tipsy, swaying on the spot and struggling to focus his attention on Nick. His eyes furrowed in confusion as he took in Nick's figure, but there was no drunken hesitation when Nick flashed his badge. The panic in the tiger's eyes spoke volumes.

'Good afternoon Sir,' Nick began casually with hands in pockets. 'Are you the owner of this premises?'

'I am.'

The tiger sounded drunk. A slight slur as he spoke indicated that the words out of his mouth were instinctive and lacking in higher levels of thought. The tiger's breath also smelt of rusty cheap liquor that made Nick cringe internally, although he maintained his outward appearance of nonchalance.

'I believe this house belongs to a Mr. Daniel Murdoch. Are you him?'



'Who's asking?'

Nick flashed his teeth. 'My name is Nick Wilde: an officer of the ZPD. Recently, there's been a complaint made about a missing purse in this area. You wouldn't happen to know anything about this purse, would you Mr. Murdoch?'

Yet again the panic in his eyes and mannerisms was visible to Nick, who at this stage was convinced that the tiger was guilty. Murdoch took a moment to compose himself in a valiant effort to sound sober and professional. He failed miserably.

'I ain't never heard nothing about no missing purse. I'm an honest man officer. Just ask anyone.'

Nick had to hold back a snort. 'Then it wouldn't be too much of a hassle if I explored your house then, would it Mr. Murdoch?'

'I 'spose not. Just gimme a minute to tidy up. It's a mess in here.'

Murdoch shut the door in Nick's face. Nick counted to five.

'Got him!'

Judy's statement was unnecessarily loud, as was the drunken complaints of Murdoch. Nick jumped over the fence that Judy had jumped over a moment ago, frowning as he did so with a lot more difficulty than her, and found himself face to face with a grinning Judy and a tiger in handcuffs swearing drunkenly as he leaned against the walls of his house to stay upright.

'Mr. Murdoch,' Nick questioned. 'Did you or did you not take steal your ex-girlfriends purse?'

Yet again, in Nick's experiences there were usually two main options that a handcuffed animal could take when placed in Murdoch's position. The first was the smart thing to do: admit to their guilt and try to do everything in their power to reduce the amount of time they spent in the cells. The second was try and deny anything ever happened and stubbornly plead innocent until the evidence was practically shoved into their face.

Murdoch seemed to be an advocator of the second option. 'I didn't nothing I swear! That bitchy tiger Valkyrie is just tryna get me in trouble with you lot.'

'Then how'd you know she complained?' Judy asked, narrowing her eyes. 'It could have been anyone else that made the complaint.'

'She has it in for me,' Murdoch countered. 'She just wants to get revenge on me cause I was sleeping 'round with some young tigress down the block.'

Judy had a disgusted look on her face. 'Then why'd you try to run?'

'â€¦I forgot I had something on now. I'm gonna be late for my daughter's birthday if you two don't let me go free.'

'So you were inside your house in a singlet, drunk as a skunk, on the day of your daughter's birthday?' Nick commented, cutting through all the bullshit and getting straight to the point. 'Mr. Murdoch, lying to the police isn't an offense that my partner or I take lightly. If we search your house and find out you do have the missing purse, I promise you you're going to be looking at extra charges and a much longer time in the cells than if you simply tell us the truth.'

Murdoch considered his choices, and Nick hoped that he would take the rational option. Having someone constantly deny that they were guilty, even when it was obvious, let alone a longer a longer much more strenuous process of arrest that put Nick directly in the firing line of Bogo. A quick glance at Judy also told him that the rabbit was getting frustrated, which wouldn't have been good for the handcuffed tiger.

'In my bedroom,' Murdoch replied in a defeated manner, head hanging low as the rational option finally won out. 'First drawer on the table to the left. I swear I was gonna give it back officers! I only wanted to make the slut think twice about dumping me.'

Nick motioned to Judy to follow him over the fence then flashed another grin at Murdoch. 'Don't go anywhere. We'll only be a second.'

They both jumped back over the fence and onto the dead grass. Nick took a moment to straighten up and stretch out his arms. He then turned to face Judy, who was waiting patiently for him to speak. The excitement in her eyes hadn't faded in the slightest over the course of the day. If anything, it had become more pronounced.

'So how does your first arrest feel, Officer Hopps?'

She seemed surprised at the question: probably expecting another dry remark or an order of some sort. However, her surprised expression quickly shifted into one of pride as she yet again puffed out her chest.

'You want the professional answer or the real answer?'

'You have all the time in the world to be an unemotional stick in front of Chief Bogo. Give it to me straight, Carrots.'

'It feels great! I'm out in the big world, chasing and taking down big criminals. It's like a dream come true.'

She spun around on the spot, giggling excitedly as she drunk in the atmosphere of her first real achievement at the ZPD. It was almost as if she was pretending to be a Princess in a fairy tale. Nick looked around, observing the rundown neighboring houses and various bits of rubbish littering the street. At least he couldn't fault her enthusiasm, but if this location was where she wanted her fairy tale to come true the bunny was seriously messed up.

Nick's ears picked up the drunken curses of Murdoch along with the metallic "click" that handcuffs made when being dragged. He guessed that Judy would have heard the noise too if she hadn't been so absorbed in the moment. Murdoch was probably trying to climb his way

over the fence to freedom, but judging from the sound of his labored breathing he was having little to no success achieving that feat.

Nick pointed in the direction of the noise. 'I wouldn't exactly call this guy a big criminal.'

Judy looked unimpressed. 'Don't ruin my moment please.'

'Take him back to the station then call it an early day. I'll search the house and get the purse back to the lady tiger. You did better then I expected today Carrots. Maybe you'll make it in the big city after all. And make sure you ditch the fox repellent tomorrow. '

He didn't wait to see her face blossom into yet another grin, choosing instead to enter the house and search for the missing purse. There was still the matter of returning it to its rightful owner. He'd made it to the doorstep before he heard Judy's voice call out from a distance.

'You know, Mr. Wilde, after everything I've heard you don't seem like a bad fox.'

And though he wouldn't admit it to anybody, for the first time in close to a year, Nick had a genuine smile on his face. Not a forced smile; not an amused smirk; not a signature grin; but a genuine smile.

End  
file.